

**The Almost Hundred-Year Gap in Finding the
New Arab Woman: Fadia Faqir's Pillars of Salt
and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby**

فجوة ما يقارب المئة عام في العثور على المرأة العربية الجديدة:
رواية "أعمدة الملح" لفاديا فقير ورواية "غاتسبي العظيم"
لفرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Master's Degree in English Language and Literature**

Department of English Language and Literature

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Authorization

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Committee Decision

This Thesis titled, “The Almost Hundred-Year Gap in Finding the New Arab Woman: *Pillars of Salt* by Fadia Faqir and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald” was successfully defended and approved on 5th June 2022.

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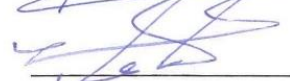
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Dedication

To my mother, without your persistence and encouragement, I would not be here.

To my father, without your strength and kindness, I would not be here.

To my siblings, without your help, I would not be here.

To my friends, without your support, I would not be here.

And to myself, I am finally here.

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Abstract

The study aims to explore the representation of Arab women in Fadia Faqir's novel, *Pillars of Salt* and the representation of Western women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*. The study also attempts to compare and contrast the two writers' representations of women. To achieve the objectives of the study, the feminist theories are applied to both novels to analyse them in terms of content, characters, and representations. Moreover, the results of the study show that the representation of women in Arab writing resembles the representation of Western women of almost one hundred years behind. The significance of the current study stems from the fact that it sheds light on literary works that are written by two different authors from different times, countries, and consequently different cultural backgrounds. In addition, the present study attempts to show that the representation of women by some Arab writers, such as Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*, resembles the representation of Western women of one hundred years ago, as in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, by applying the feminist approach. There have been many studies conducted on the two novels, separately, but up to the researcher's knowledge, there have been no studies which tackle both works together and examine the way women are represented in both literary works.

Keywords: feminism, The Great Gatsby, Fadia Faqir, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pillars of Salt.

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الملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف تمثيل المرأة العربية في رواية فاديا فقير "أعمدة الملح" وتمثيل النساء الغربيات في رواية فرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد "غاتسبي العظيم" وتحاول الدراسة أيضًا إلى المقارنة بين تمثيلات الكاتبين للمرأة. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم تطبيق النظريات النسوية على كلتا الروائتين لتحليلهما من حيث المحتوى والشخصيات والتمثيلات. أيضًا، تتبع أهمية الدراسة الحالية من حقيقة أنها تلقي الضوء على الأعمال الأدبية التي كتبها مؤلفان مختلفان من أوقات وبلدان مختلفة، وبالتالي خلفيات ثقافية مختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تحاول الدراسة الحالية من خلال تطبيق النهج النسوي إظهار أن تمثيل المرأة من قبل بعض الكتاب العرب، مثل تمثيل فاديا فقير في روايتها "أعمدة الملح" التي تم نشرها عام 1997، يشبه تمثيل النساء الغربيات قبل حوالي مئة عام، كما هو الحال في رواية فرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد "غاتسبي العظيم" التي تم نشرها عام 1925. لقد كان هناك العديد من الدراسات التي أجريت على الروائتين بشكل منفصل، ولكن على حد علم الباحث لم تكن هناك دراسات تتناول كلا العملين معًا ولا الطريقة التي يتم بها تمثيل النساء معًا في كلا العملين الأدبيين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، غاتسبي العظيم، فاديا فقير، فرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد، أعمدة

الملح

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Today, the gap between the status of women in the Middle East and women in the West is significant. Even though women, globally, are still fighting for their rights to improve their status, Western women however are in the lead. On the other hand, Arab women are decades behind. Such controversial topics between the East and West or amongst women from different cultures are clearly palpable in literary works because literature reflects reality.

Women in the Middle East have reached a stage, where they have gained their basic rights but still have not been able to overcome the patriarchal traditions and the norms that are restrictive. There are some women who have gained many degrees and reached higher positions, but this cannot be generalised to all women in the Middle East. By being an Arab and belonging to certain tribes or communities, Arab women are expected to behave within a pre-modified structure and are never permitted to seek their ambitions unless they were within limits- either the limits of what is accepted by society, or by what is considered honourable or by what is enforced upon them.

The patriarchal ideology mainly controls the core of norms, customs, traditions, and values in Arab society. Male dominance over women in the Arab regions starts from the closest unit, the family. Abudabbeh (1996) states that the “Arab family can be described as patriarchal, pyramidically hierarchal with regard to age and sex, and extended” (p. 427). Male relatives (fathers, brothers, and husbands) control women’s rights and statuses. In *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, El Saadawi (2007) argues that the superiority of men over women is evident in the Arabic society, whether in class relations, or even within the family. This is all due to the infused patriarchal beliefs. She also adds that the Arab woman has lost her human essence by turning into a controlled object set to achieve fixed aims. For instance, an Arab woman must marry and bear children- preferably boys. In order to do so, she must be obedient, young, pious and submissive to please her Arab husband- or to at least be able to find one. Therefore, girls ought to be continuously watched to stay under the family’s control (El Saadawi, 2007).

In male-dominated societies, such as the Middle East, the empowerment of men over women is seen in all aspects of the community. Men are set as leaders; thus, decision-makers, whether in the entire family or in anything related to women, e.g., seeking education, marriage, choosing whom to marry and even behaving in a certain demeanour. According to a recent

Congressional Research Service report, “Arab Barometer’s 2019 survey on women’s rights in fifteen Arab countries found that the majority of the survey respondents believed that men are better leaders and should have greater say in family decision making” (*Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress 2020*, p. 3).

On the contrary, Western women today reside in liberal societies where they are free to make their own decisions, continue their education or not, get married or not, start a family or not, have children or not, to seek careers as they wish, etc. Women, since the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the feminist movement and the Suffragette have succeeded in rejecting traditional roles enforced upon women in the past, such as being the obedient housewife. The modern Western woman has also been liberated from the shackles of false femininity that were imposed by masculine orthodox ideals based on patriarchal heritages where women were set in a certain traditional frame suitable for men and their desires. For example, according to patriarchal beliefs, women need to be kind, humble, sensible, and sweet; however, men should be logical, strong, and reasonable, therefore, masculine (Tong & Botts, 2016). False traditional gender roles are obstacles that have been overcome by Western women unlike in the Middle East, where they are still an ongoing quest.

As literature imitates life and its different realities, the representation of Western and Middle Eastern women in literary works is subsequently opposing. In both Western and Middle Eastern literature, Arabian women are shown as oppressed, uneducated, submissive, domestic, and weak- weak in terms of power, not physical strength. Abu Baker (2021) says Arab women in literary works are shown as fragile, frail, and abused. He believes they are traumatised and suffer from PTSD: Post-traumatic stress disorder. They have also not been entitled to any position of authority and thus are treated as inferior for they are incapable of decision-making nor permitted so. On the contrary, modern-day Western women are shown differently. Whether in novels, films or even children's books, contemporary Western female characters can be seen as confident, sensible and in leadership positions. For instance, Gao (2021) views *The Great Gatsby's* female characters as powerful, daring, and brave women who stand against society's norms by rejecting typical relationships between men and women. He believes that the characters have been promoted with traits that were limited to men only as in Daisy's affair despite her husband's knowledge or Jordan's masculine conduct and appearance. Gao here describes the term The New Woman as in the characters break the image of the Victorian woman by behaving and looking very differently from them because such choices were not granted to Victorian, therefore, they have drastically transformed the image of

women in the West, especially in comparison to their predecessors: Victorian women. Another, more contemporary, example of how the image of Western women changed from the traditional Victorian to the contemporary liberated image is the female character Hermione Granger in the renowned book series *Harry Potter*. She is presented as extremely intelligent, determined, and protective. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, she says: “Books! And cleverness! There are more important things — friendship and bravery and — oh Harry — be careful!” (Rowling 1997, 287). Such behaviour and character traits would not have been found in Western females in the past due to traditional gender roles. They would have suited a man rather than a woman, as a woman could not have been portrayed as direct, dominating, and vigorous. However, as time changes, so did The New Woman. Her image kept changing, and is still changing today, especially when the impact of the transformed image is evident in societies’ youngsters who prefer the direct and assertive Hermione over many others. This would have been an extreme to see in Victorian characters such as Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. May Hassan Srayisah (2017) says that Victorian women in literature were portrayed as weak, fragile, insignificant, and inferior to men. All of which started changing with the first feminist wave, and by default reflected on literary works.

One of the Arab diasporic writers, who highlight the status of Arab women in the Middle East is Fadia Faqir, who is a Bedouin Jordanian-British. She was born and raised in Jordan and then continued her higher studies in the United Kingdom. She has many renowned works such as *Nisanti* (1987) and *My Name is Salma* (2017). Her books often evoke feminist issues in the Middle East, such as women's oppression and relationships between men and women, which is evidently seen in her second novel, *Pillars of Salt* (1997). The novel is set in Jordan under British Mandate and presents the voices of two repressed Arab females, Maha and Um Saad, with a male narrator called Sami. "The "apocalyptic vision of the novel refers to the continuing repression of Arab women, whose daily contributions to the economy and struggle to survive in a male-dominated society have largely been overlooked" (Faqir 2017, p. 3). Faqir presents her main female character Maha, as witty and resilient yet does not become the head of the family although she is more responsible than her reckless brother-who takes control over everything. And so, her role is limited because of her family's paternal beliefs.

Similar themes are seen in F. Scott Fitzgerald's American classic, *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald is an American novelist who comes from an aristocratic family. His love for Zelda, his wife, motivated him to write and inspired many of his works (Mizener 2019). One of his most notable works

is *The Great Gatsby*, which takes place in the early 1920s, an era of great openness and change in American ideals and society; hence, the roaring twenties and the New Woman. Fitzgerald portrays three different female figures named Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle. On the surface, these women appear to be happy and powerful, but they are ruled by males who dominate their lives due to the internalised patriarchy in society. For instance, Daisy wishes her infant daughter to be a “fool – that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool” (Fitzgerald 2010,16).

Although published in different times, women, in both novels, are subjected to male dominance due to the archaic values of patriarchy that are embodied in the societies and norms leaving their women with fragments of rights and freedoms. In other words, “Arab women are oppressed in a certain way, but Western women are [too...]” (Moore 2011, p. 8). Faqir, in her novel, *Pillars of Salt*, shows the lives of two Arab women: a Jordanian and a Syrian, who seem extremely strong and independent, yet at the same time are granted limited freedom especially when it comes to marriage or running the family’s trade. Equivalently, in *The Great Gatsby*, which is set in the 1920s, the female characters are presented as very powerful and determined, but they are still subjected to male-dominancy due to the patriarchal society of that time as a result of patriarchy and its planted ideas in the society.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The representation of women in Arab writing resembles the representation of Western women one hundred years behind. The study aims to explore how women are represented by Fadia Faqir, an Arab British writer, in her novel *Pillars of Salt*, and the representation of women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. The study also tries to reveal how women are represented in the same way, although *Pillars of Salt* was published approximately one hundred years after *The Great Gatsby*.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Explore the representation of Arab women in Fadia Faqir's novel, *Pillars of Salt*.
2. Explore the representation of Western women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*.
3. Compare and contrast the representations of women by the two writers.

1.4 Questions of the study

In order to achieve the mentioned objectives, this study answers the following questions:

1. How does Fadia Faqir represent Arab women in her novel *Pillars of Salt*?

2. How does F. Scott Fitzgerald represent women in his novel *The Great Gatsby*?
3. What are the differences and similarities between the two writers' representations of women?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the current study stems from the fact that it sheds light on literary works that are written by two different authors from different times, countries, and consequently different cultural backgrounds. In addition, the present study attempts to show that the representation of women by some Arab writers, such as Fadia Faqir in *Pillars of Salt*, resembles the representation of Western women one hundred years ago, as in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, through the lens of feminism. There have been many studies conducted on the two novels, separately, but up to the researcher's knowledge, there have not been any studies which tackle both works together and how women are represented in both literary works.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the time it has been written in. The study is also limited to the mentioned authors, Fadia Faqir and F. Scott Fitzgerald and their mentioned literary works, *Pillars of Salt* and *The Great Gatsby*. The study, and what it concludes, cannot be generalised to the other authors' literary works.

1.7 Definitions of Terms:

There are four key terms in the study that are defined as follows:

Masculinity: It is a social construction that refers to certain characteristics that are attributed to men. Masculinity is imposed due to patriarchal ideology that favours men over women. Masculine men are analytic, robust, and prudent. Men, therefore, are capable of self-control unlike women who are viewed as weak (Tong 2016).

Feminism: It is a theory that focuses on women's oppression, and a strategy that resists patriarchy. It emphasises "the importance of social and political activism to ensure equal opportunity and equal access to justice for women" (Tyson 2008, p. 91).

Patriarchy: It is a term used to express male dominance. In *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Sylvia Walby describes patriarchy as "A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 1990, p. 20).

The New Woman: It is a term that describes the transformed image of women in the nineteenth century. It traces both real women in 19th-century societies who tackled women's right to vote and revolutionary female characters of literature whose ambitions were greatly undertaken (Buzwell 2014).

Roaring Twenties: It is a term that describes the twenties of the twentieth century, usually in The United States of America. During that time, arts such as dancing and music flourished (Longman 2021).

CHAPTER TWO: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter includes two sections: theoretical studies and empirical studies. In the theoretical studies, the researcher presents theories, views and themes that tackle feminism and their viewpoints regarding women's oppression and studies that discuss the views of the two authors, Fadia Faqir and F. Scott Fitzgerald on feminism. The second section addresses the empirical studies, which tackle Fadia Faqir's work, *Pillars of Salt* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's work, *The Great Gatsby*, and how they represent women and how they critically analyse feminist issues in the mentioned novels.

2.2 Theoretical studies:

2.2.1 Review of Feminism

One of the most important feminist figures, Simone De- Beauvoir (1949) describes women as "others" because women are treated as so in society. She believes that men are portrayed as dominant while women are submissive, therefore, the image of "otherness" has been created by men in patriarchal societies. She also says that antifeminists use biology, religion, and philosophy to convince women of their inferiority to men which eventually leads to women accepting their identity as a "second-sex" or accepting their place in society-home. Thus, staying at home would keep women under the dominance of men and give men more power for they are the ones working-

earning a salary- which enables them to be independent. Besides this, patriarchal men tend to keep women uneducated and weak in order to keep them under control (De Beauvoir 1949).

David Lodge (1988/2000) also explains feminism by defining all its types and models such as American feminism, French feminism, Marxist feminism and so on. However, through all his definitions, there is a specific point in common which is: that feminism rejects all forms and shapes of patriarchy. Thus, feminism refuses male-dominancy over women in politics, education, economy, literature, health, work and even language. Therefore, feminism - and any kind of feminism- focuses on the patriarchal ideology as opposition to patriarchy to eliminate male domination in all aspects of life.

Similarly, Mary Maynard (1995) does not give a clear definition of feminism but rather an explanation of the term's developments and branches. However, she claims that it is puzzling because even though the labels differ, still they can intersect and overlap. For example, "the labels Marxist and socialist feminism are interchangeable," Therefore, this may cause confusion especially since all categories serve similar aims such as addressing the oppression of women or calling for political reforms (p. 262).

Furthermore, Nawar Al-Hassan Golley (2004) links feminism to nationalism and as a result, introduces the term Arab Feminism. He says that the modern Arab woman has been affected by nationalism, feminism, and

colonialism, yet Arab feminism is a unique creative production of “Arabic political and socioeconomic dynamics” (2004).

Margot Badran (2004) defines the term as the call for sustaining equality in rights between men and women based on The Holy Quran. She calls for raising awareness regarding equality and Islamic feminism by comprehending religious texts and addressing the audience directly. Additionally, Badran (2004) also sees that this type of feminism can function in any society because it seeks justice in a community, therefore, not only justice for Muslims.

Wilfred L. Guerin (2005) argues that feminism is a political approach that focuses on the missing rights of women. He further continues by saying that it is concerned with women in patriarchal cultures and works of literature because the previous privileged men over women and therefore, women are diminished and muted. Also, to him, feminism can criticize other cultures and approaches which put women in certain frames and assign them distorted pre-shaped roles.

In *Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives*, Abbott *et al* (2006) link feminism to the rejection of imposed gender roles. It is said that the media plays a role in widening the gap of gender inequality as it helps in defining the identities of genders. According to feminists, gender is a social construct and media serves as a tool for the construction. For example, mass

media objectify women and sexualize them, which fortifies patriarchal ideologies where women ought to be feminine and good-looking.

Moreover, Ronald Hamowy (2008) refers to feminism as a “belief” in which men and women need to be treated equally especially when it comes to politics and morality. However, he differs from the previous regarding the term “equally. He explains that “equality” has multiple meanings and thus changes from one person to another. Some view it as the equality of men and women under the law while others see it as the redistribution of power equally amongst all members of society. He also says that many movements have been attributed to feminism, in specific, in the last two centuries.

Sarah Mills and Louise Mullany (2011) say that there are many types of feminism and so feminism cannot be defined in one certain way within one meaning due to its diversity. However, they claim that, in general, there are two shared points amongst all meanings: one, feminism is a political movement that explores gender roles, and how men and women are constructed. Two, feminism aims to tackle the issue of inequality between the sexes.

Likewise, Sara Motta, Cristina Flesher Fominaya, Catherine Eschle and Laurence Cox (2011) suggest that feminism has tried to eliminate patriarchal beliefs from society since the nineteenth century and establish equal rights in all forms between men and women. Also, they say that communities up to

this date are still under paternal impact. Yet, they claim that feminism today is problematic and needs to aid suppressed voices, due to the plurality of feminism, by fighting all forms of neoliberal policies.

In addition, Munro (2013) argues that the Fourth Wave of feminism is on the rise. First, Munro defines the three waves of feminism. The First Wave aimed to gain a political right for women which is the right to vote. Then, the First Wave gradually expanded with time to address women's injustice and inequality in society which caused the Second Wave. Later, the Third Wave emerged focusing on gender, queer theory and what the terms 'male' and 'female' mean. She adds then that a Fourth Wave is rising from the Third Wave. The Fourth Wave does not only stand against racism, misogyny, and sexism but also fights them in many ways including activism and online campaigns. For instance, using various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter serves feminists' activism globally which gives expression to disempowered women.

As previously said, Cordelia Tucker O'Sullivan (2015) believes that feminism is the call for women's rights in order to attain equal rights for both men and women. Yet, she links feminism to humanism; a scientific method that aims to provide a fruitful ethical life for everyone. She adds by saying that feminism and humanism are close terms, but not identical since they both have commonly shared points, such as fighting for equal rights and

fighting against discrimination. However, she calls for seeking feminism not only humanism since it focuses more on gender issues.

Furthermore, Noel McAfee (2018) explains the term feminism as a movement that aims to end all patterns of prejudice based on gender, especially for women. He also says that the word feminism has several definitions that change according to the party using it. Historically, it is a political movement such as the First Wave which focused on obtaining basic political rights for women in Europe and The United States. On the other hand, the word has drastically changed in today's societies as recent feminism focuses on identity, gender roles and what women from all different backgrounds, cultures, races, ethnicities, and classes missed. Also, he adds the notion of feminism has been witnessed long ago as it dates to ancient times, however, the term became official in the nineteenth century. Thus, suggesting that feminist beliefs existed in anything related to women's rights or women's oppression.

2.2.2 Fadia Faqir and F. Scott Fitzgerald's Views on Feminist Issues

Starting with Fadia Faqir's views on feminist issues, in an interview with Lindsey Moore, Fadia Faqir explains her belief that women, Eastern and Western, are oppressed in different ways. However, she voices her works to entitle marginalised women in the Arab region for she is an Arab herself. So, she aims to show women differently by questioning male authority, religious

authority, and patriarchal ideologies. Therefore, the female voices, specifically Arab female voices, in her books are retaliating against patriarchy. She also links her works to the current situation of Arab women suggesting that fighting patriarchy in the Middle East is an ongoing struggle since some women are still seen and treated as inferiors particularly for having experienced such acts by her father (Moore 2011). In agreement, Fatima Daoud Al-Majarha (2016) says that Faqir tackles women's issues in the Arab region to address the oppression of Middle Eastern women in conservative societies and to show her support in seeking equal rights in such patriarchal communities.

Moving to F. Scott Fitzgerald's views on feminist issues, some believe F. Scott Fitzgerald is a feminist for his different portrayal of women in his novel *The Great Gatsby*. For instance, Ivan Jhazman (2020) finds Fitzgerald's depiction of the flapper girl as a realistic perception of the nineteen twenty women, and he believes it to be well reflected in his novel. Furthermore, Jhazman says that the text enables the woman of the lower class and focuses on her desires and emergence in society.

On the contrary, others see Fitzgerald's work as a negative representation of women and a sign of their oppression. S. J. Prislin (2018) says women are seen as property to be owned and thrown when the owner wishes. Prislin also blames patriarchal ideologies that control their lives and adds that even the

false image of granted freedom to them is nothing but a tool in disguise to be used by patriarchs to serve their purposes; to control and objectify women. Moreover, the researcher of this study supports the latter because Fitzgerald chose to neglect women's views intentionally and disempower their representations as he wrote to Perkins: "If the book [*The Great Gatsby*] fails commercially it will be from one of two reasons or both. First, the title is only fair, rather bad than good. Second and most important, the book contained no important woman character, and women control the fiction market at present. I don't think the unhappy end matters particularly" (Chalupa 2013).

2.3 Empirical Studies: The Representation of Women in Fadia Faqir's novel, Pillars of Salt and F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, The Great Gatsby

The current section addresses the empirical studies which tackle Fadia Faqir's work *Pillars of Salt* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's work *The Great Gatsby*, and how they represent women and how they critically analyse feminist issues in their writings.

2.3.1 The Representation of women in Fadia Faqir's Pillars of Salt

As a start, Mahmoud El Bwietel (2015) refers to Fadia Faqir as a feminist writer who aimed to reveal the unjust treatment of Arab women. He says that *Pillars of Salt* expresses the sufferings of women in patriarchal societies. As a result, the women live in wretchedness under male dominance. He also

draws attention to the relationships of men and women in Arab societies and describes them as inadequate for the women are treated poorly by men as if they are nothing but mere servants with no rights while men are seen as superior and stronger than the females. He later comments by saying that such relationships are embedded in the minds of Arab males and females since childhood as they are nurtured to behave as so; men are rebellious while women are submissive.

Yousef (2016) supports the notion that *Pillars of Salt* shows subjugated women in a patriarchal Arab country. However, he attributes patriarchy in Jordan, or Trans-Jordan in the times of the novel, to colonisation. He further explains that patriarchal constants were entrenched in Jordan's culture, and Arab as well, as a result of colonial authorities, says: "colonization represents more than just a white man who has stripped them off their culture and freedom. It is equally about an oppressed and unfulfilling life that they are ultimately forced to live as a result of oppressive patriarchy and an equally subversive colonial power" (p. 389).

In resemblance, Shahd Alshammari (2016), in her book *Literary Madness in British, Postcolonial, and Bedouin Women's Writing*, explores *Pillars of Salt* as a critique of women's status in Jordan while also connecting patriarchy to colonialism and post-colonialism. Alshammari suggests that patriarchal behaviours such as Daffash's, Maha's brother, are a way to please

the coloniser or because of being colonised, thus, a repetition in behavioural patterns. Yet, she points to the changes imperialism/colonialism has done to the Bedouin community which lead to the suppression of the Bedouin woman.

Alqahtani (2017) believes that Fadia Faqir in *Pillars of Salt* sheds light on women's oppression in Jordan. She says that Faqir is against the subjugation of women in Jordanian society. Also, she indicates that violence against women does exist in some Arab countries, and not only in Jordan. Alqahtani however argues that the negative treatment of some women in some Middle Eastern countries is not related to Islam and its beliefs but is a result of patriarchal ideologies that influence Arab countries. She further explains that patriarchal mindsets exploit Islam in order to control women in the region. Adding to that, she suggests that following the real teachings of Islam and raising awareness would ultimately stop the patriarchal victimization of Arab women.

Likewise, Abu Baker (2021), finds *Pillars of Salt*, as well as other works of Faqir, as a book that aims to tackle issues of Arab women living in unfair patriarchal systems where their women struggle with isolation and distress. He also emphasises the fact that the novel's female characters are traumatised due to their ill-treatment by male relatives. For instance, they are beaten, belittled and persecuted. However, he claims that these protagonists

attempt to erase their abusive memories and taunting identities, thus making the theme of identity erasure one of the most vital themes in the novel.

3.3.2 The Representation of Women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

Starting with Affroni (2013) who analyses *The Great Gatsby* from a feminist point of view to show the superiority of men over women in Western society during the nineteenth century. First, the paper tackles the representation of female figures such as Myrtle Wilson who is objectified, abused, and manipulated by Tom Buchanan. On the other hand, Tom is presented as a powerful wealthy proud man, thus, he is the typical patriarchal man who dominates women surrounding him such as his wife, Daisy, or his lover, Myrtle. Affroni (2013) also suggests that the oppressed women in patriarchal societies, as in the novel, tend to depend on men rather than themselves because of the unfair system that does not offer them an opportunity in advancing male power.

On the other hand, Maia Samkanashvili (2013) views the novel's female characters positively. She compares them and their status prior to the First World War. She says they were treated as housewives only, meaning they were obedient submissive controlled weak women whose only task was to care for the house, husband, and family. However, this image changed drastically after the war because women were able to drink, smoke and dress

as they pleased- such traits were privileges of men only. She also believes that F. Scott Fitzgerald replicated women of that time perfectly as he introduced The New Woman in a daring new way that defies society's norms then.

However, LI Bao-feng and JIA Xue-ying (2015) explore gender roles in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* differently from the prior. They address the issue of gender inequality from two sides: masculinism and feminism. According to them, masculinism refers to patriarchal male power in society while feminism is a rejection of those values. In other words, the novel shows that men are entitled, unlike women, because men dominate powerful ranks in society, economy, and politics. There are also other major differences in personality traits. For example, men are proven to be strong, proud, smart, and powerful whereas women are portrayed as materialistic, superficial, and immoral. They also believe that such depictions are found in a patriarchal society which, consequently, subjugates women and prioritizes masculinism over feminism.

Furthermore, Lorena Seda (2020) sheds light on classism by comparing the three main females in *The Great Gatsby*: Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle. First, she starts with Daisy, a wealthy woman from the upper class, who is contrasted with Myrtle, a poor lower-class worker. However, she believes both are controlled by one man: Tom Buchanan. Thus, both women

do not have occupations and are financially dependent on men. Jordan is unlike the previous two since she has a profession and is neither rich nor poor, therefore, she serves as a medium between the condition of the previous women. She could be seen as a representation of the emerging middle class. So, the three represent different classes of the time. Another important point to mention is that she thinks the women are represented as powerless and to an extent, victims of classes- even Jordan Baker who attains some power by cheating in a tournament to win.

Differently, Yang Gao (2021) describes *The Great Gatsby* as a book for women. He supports his statement by exploring women's images in the novel, especially when it comes to women, marriage, and relationships. For example, he comments on Daisy's affair with Jay Gatsby despite her husband's knowledge. Such behaviours would not have been accepted in the past nor tolerated. He adds by calling Tom a traditional man, yet he had to submit to his wife's desires, which here is represented in adultery. Further, Gao explains that the novel shows the severe change in women's freedom of choice which emphasises both the book and its women's modernity. Gao's point of view relates to the standard image of The New Woman, which is preferred by many critics and researchers.

Soheila Pirhadi Tavandashti (n.d.) from Islamic Azad University says that she experiences this novel as a mirror of patriarchal ideologies in

societies, or American societies. She also points to the importance of feminist criticism, particularly through this novel. She believes that it represents American society's rejection of the changes women faced post World War One. Additionally, she argues that despite *The Great Gatsby's* superficial attempt in projecting "The New Woman" still-till date- Western women are subject to patriarchal ideologies. Moreover, she says that the book's women characters are shown as aggressive, greedy, and abused due to their oppression.

The prior review of related literature sheds light on feminism and feminist criticism of *Pillars of Salt* and *The Great Gatsby*. Feminist analysis and criticism are applied to the previously mentioned novels as in previous studies- that enhance the researcher's perceptual experience of the literary works. However, in this paper, the researcher compares and contrasts Eastern and Western women in the novels for the sake of proving Arab women in literature are almost a hundred years behind Western women in literature- as reflected in various life circumstances and realities. The researcher would also like to note that the time gap is approximate to a century because the researcher compares between the time of the publication of *The Great Gatsby* in 1925, and the time of reading *Pillars of Salt* which was in 2020. However, the precise time gap between the two novels is seventy-two years,

until the publication of this study in 2022, since *Pillars of Salt* was published in 1997.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Procedures

3.1 Methods

The study uses the theories of feminism to approach the two novels, *Pillars of Salt* by Fadia Faqir, and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Therefore, the method applied is analytical and descriptive as it views the previously mentioned novels and explores the connection between them from a feminist lens. The researcher will tackle the representation of women in both novels, their roles, social relationships, kinships, and repertoires. The study also aims to explore the similarities and differences between the women in both works regarding the dominance of male authority over them all. Additionally, the paper aims to link between the term The New Woman of the roaring twenties and the contemporary image of Arab women to find The New Arab Woman which indicates that women in both terms are revolutionary, daring, and strong, yet still the fall under the male dominance due to patriarchal societies.

Feminism is a literary theory that has various meanings and types-sometimes referred to it as feminisms. According to the Cambridge dictionary, feminism is “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or

the set of activities intended to achieve this state” (2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism>).

This definition correlates with the rise of feminism as a movement in the nineteenth century especially as a political movement to proclaim women’s rights. Yet, the term has undergone extreme changes in accordance with historic events, changing time periods and relations to different world cultures.

According to Lois Tyson (2015), feminism could be identified as an approach that examines the role of women in literature with a rejection of socially constructed gender roles. Furthermore, feminism aims to show the oppression of women by patriarchal authorities whether socially, politically, academically, or economically. Additionally, the feminist approach focuses on the negative representation of women due to male-dominancy. This could be seen as a modern general definition of the term.

The researcher will analyse the representation of female characters in both novels based on the feminist theory and will compare between the two cultures in the books, Eastern and Western, whilst focusing on the similarities between the two by utilizing feminist analysis and criticism.

3.2 Summary of Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*

Pillars of Salt is a novel written by Fadia Faqir. The novel is set in Trans-Jordan, now The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, through and after the British Mandate. There are three narrators in the book, two of them are main female characters and one male narrator who is referred to as "Storyteller" or Sami. The book presents two stories about the character Maha, a Bedouin Jordanian living in The Jordan Valley, and Um Saad, a Syrian living in the capital of Jordan- Amman. Therefore, the novel showcases two different communities in Jordan: urban and Bedouin. The women meet in a Psychiatric hospital and tell their stories to each other while being intervened by the Storyteller, who is an omniscient narrator. As they narrate, the women present their miseries, oppression, subjugation by male relatives and abuse in Arab societies.

Maha is a resilient Bedouin and the daughter of a Sheikh. She is responsible and witty- unlike her disappointing brother. However, she still must get married, which is something that she does, yet she fails in getting pregnant at the beginning- a matter refused by society and family. Eventually, she succeeds in conceiving a child, a son in specific, but her husband dies before meeting his child. On the other hand, Hanniyeh or Um Saad suffers from a tyrant father who refuses to marry his daughter to a good man because he is Circassian. Additionally, he weds her to an old vile

wealthy man, Abu Saad- hence the name; Um Saad. She becomes a mother of nine children but later her husband remarries a younger woman and treats Um Saad as a mere servant.

3.3 Summary of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby is a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The events of the novel take place in The United States of America during the 1920s. It tells the story of a poor man, Jay Gatsby, chasing his American Dream- a dream which he accomplishes. His story is narrated by his friend, Nick Carraway, who plays the role of a character and narrator in the novel. There are many important characters in the novel, Daisy Buchanan, Jay's lover, Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, Jordan Baker, Nick's girlfriend. Additionally, there is a minor character in the book who is vital to the story, Myrtle Wilson. She is a lower-class married woman who commits adultery with the rich Tom Buchanan; however, she is killed in a car accident.

The three women face different circumstances. For example, Daisy cheats on her abusive husband with her previous lover, Jay Gatsby. Jordan is a golfer and a champion, but she cheats in the tournament to win. Lastly, Myrtle seeks fortune by any means possible even by cheating on her pious husband with an abusive man- Tom.

3.4 Procedures of the Study

The researcher followed certain procedures to conduct the study:

1. The researcher read and analysed the two novels through a feminist lens.
2. The researcher explored previous studies that address the representation of women in relevance to the study.
3. The researcher wrote the proposal.
4. The researcher provided evidence from both works that represent women negatively due to male dominance.
5. The researcher compared between the two works to show similarities in the representation of Western women in *The Great Gatsby* and Arab/Middle Eastern women in *Pillars of Salt*.
6. The researcher used this evidence with scholars' arguments.
7. The researcher reached to certain conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

This chapter discusses and explores the representation of Arab women in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* and the representation of Western women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The chapter also compares and contrasts between the novels' leading women.

4.1 The Representation of Women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

This section investigates the representation of Western women in the 1920s through discussing Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson in *The Great Gatsby*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is one of the most renowned authors of the Roaring Twenties which was a period of prosperity after the First World War, especially in The United States of America. During that period, partying, music, and dancing were a lifestyle which many consider as a reaction to the war. Fitzgerald's works, especially the mentioned novel, are greatly appreciated by everyone. However, the researcher believes that his representation of women is highly negative and submissive as all the novel's female characters are suffering from men's abuse and control due to patriarchal beliefs. First, Daisy from an outer look, seems as if she lives a nice life with her loving husband by her side, however, the opposite happens. This is seen in the following words, "And I hope she'll be a fool - that's the

best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool”” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 11). Her wish for her daughter is to be nothing more than an unintelligent silly girl, who is pleasing to the eyes, and expresses Daisy’s character and inner thoughts. Here, it is obvious that she aims to satisfy men by looking beautiful and acting empty-headed because men of her community are only attracted to vain women, who are attractive. This also reflects on her relationship with her husband, who is an example of paternal man. Tom Buchanan, her husband, is not bothered by his wife’s relationship with another man because to him adultery is not a reason to lose his trophy wife. To him, acting as if he has a perfect marriage in front of others is more important than working on the marriage itself as he tries to manifest a play of the happy couple to his other rich friends with a trophy wife by his side: beautiful and shallow. Shallow in the sense that is vain, has no goals or ambitions and is interested in wealth only. Added to that, the couple never discuss the issues between them nor try to amend matters, and even when Daisy has a chance of a real committed relationship, she still chooses to remain in a loveless marriage as she is socially structured to seem happy even if she is not, as well as staying in a miserable marriage rather than asking for a divorce.

Similarly, Bao-feng and Xue-ying (2015) suggest that men in the novel are represented positively as they are well-achieved, intelligent, and hold

high positions both at work and in society, while women are weak, fragile, and vain. The contrast between the two representations shows the gender gap between men and women which could explain why women are unable to leave their abusive condescending men because, simply, they have no other option since they are framed as so. Also, these women are represented as not wanting to struggle further by defying society or its norms.

Further, the novel continues with the negative representation of its women due to the bad description of its men. For example, in chapter two, Tom has a conversation with Myrtle about how much she likes dogs and wants one. She asks if the dog is a male or a female, Tom replies “It’s a bitch,” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 17). Therefore, the men in the novel want to demean any female even if she is an animal. Then Tom continues his scorn of women when he tells Myrtle “Here’s your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 17). In that same chapter, the narrator, Nick Carraway, uses the word “feminine” to belittle a man named Mr McKee by describing him as a “feminine man from the flare below” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 18). Such words convey damaging stereotypes about women as they imply that they are less worthy than men- as if they come right behind men rather than beside them, which explains the use of the term “feminine” in a derogatory manner. On the other hand, more powerful vocabulary is used to describe men. For instance, when talking about Jay Gatsby, he is projected

to the audience as powerful, strong and scary when Catherine says, “I’m scared of him. I’d hate to have him get anything on me” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 20). Lorena Seda (2020) suggests that women are under the influence of men especially Myrtle and Daisy. Daisy is the rich woman from the upper class, who is contrasted by Myrtle, a poor lower-class worker, yet both women- despite their differences- are controlled by Tom Buchanan. Therefore, both women do not have occupations and are financially dependent on men which entitles men even more power and authority over women.

The insulting representation also suggests that women are shallow creatures with no hopes, dreams or ambitions. Myrtle for example is not given worth, but for her physical appearance alone. She is introduced as a poor woman, whose only purpose in life is to either destroy Daisy or become her; “Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 22) as if her vanity does not pass the thought of Daisy and Daisy’s life. Later in the novel, the narrator keeps his view of women as he compares them to “moths” when he says, “girls came and went like moths” (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 24) which proves that even the narrator himself is another patriarchal man, who looks down at women. Even when Nick talks about his relationship partner, Jordan Baker, he does not praise her although she is his girlfriend, instead, he says she “avoided clever, shrewd men,” who is “dishonest,” too (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 36). Women are also described as fools who cry out suddenly for no valid

reason to indicate that they are emotional creatures whose feelings control them. For instance, in chapter five Daisy starts crying the moment she sees beautiful shirts at Jay Gatsby's mansion. Some may argue that she is triggered to cry, but no proof of that is evident in the novel. This also resembles how patriarchal ancient Greece thought of women as hysterical beings who cry suddenly unsatisfyingly. So, such descriptions could trick readers into believing that women are empty-headed with hormonal changes that control them and their behaviours which is a notion evident in patriarchal mindsets.

Moreover, the power of the novel's narrative is evident in its men. While women cry for no reason as the men are seen are powerful heavenly creatures. A man is described as "son of God" (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 61) unlike women who are similar to "moths" (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 24) which is another strong positive connotation associated with men only. In addition, women are ridiculed, not only the leading three but all women, especially when Tom uses stereotyping messages to talk about women like in chapter six when he says: "women get these notions in their heads" (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 74). Even though Tom is a wealthy educated man, who is married to another wealthy educated woman, he still tries to enforce negative stereotypes on women- as many other men do. Even though there is no need for such a statement as all the friends are about to go out together to have some fun, and perhaps go to

town. Even Nick describes Tom's manner of speaking as "savagely" (Fitzgerald 2010, p. 74). However, it is a feature that patriarchal men have; ridiculing women when possible to impose male authority on women.

Later in the novel, signs of physical and mental abuse against women are extremely clear in the relationship of the Wilson couple. George Wilson hits his wife, shouts at her and locks her in their house and acts proudly as if he flaunts the abuse, "I've got my wife locked in up there" (Fitzgerald 2010, p.85) he says. To put matters in context, George had just found that his wife has cheated on him. Yet, that is not a reason to abuse a person physically and verbally. Even if the person cheats, it is inhumane and illegal to hit them, and keep them against their will.

Just as the researcher, many other researchers and critics share the same views regarding *The Great Gatsby*. First, Patrick Hicks, from Saint John's University, explores in his thesis, females, and feminism in Fitzgerald's works. He believes that the author of this novel projects women characters in a negative way. Hicks says, "society views Fitzgerald as a chauvinist" (Hicks 1992, p. 62) as a result of his representation of women. For example, he forces an image of a delicate "feminine" female through Daisy, who is a shy beautiful girl, whose lover leaves for War, and then obeys society and marries a rich man from her class. Daisy also does the same to her daughter as she raises her to be the delicate fool feminine girl society expects (Hicks

1992). Also, Yu Yaoye (2021) in his article titled, “*The Great Gatsby: Feminism in the Jazz Age*”, says that Fitzgerald has depicted women as corrupt, crooked, untrustworthy, vain, fake, and even flamboyant although they seem physically beautiful and attract men because of their physical appearance.

Furthermore, the distortion of women’s images does not appear only in the novel and its author but continues with its adaptations. Zhu Yuwen criticises a film adaptation of the famous novel, in his paper, saying that the film presents deformed images of women by showing Daisy Buchanan as an exploiter who follows only money by any means possible, and Myrtle Wilson as a silly fool woman who is willingly used by Tom Buchanan to fulfil her goal- money. He also adds that Jordan Baker is supposed to be a representative of The New Woman, yet she is seen as conceited and self-centred (Zhu 2016). Zhu concludes his journal article by claiming that *The Great Gatsby* is misogynistic and says: “No matter the movie or the novel *The Great Gatsby* is both for males. The three females’ characters are regarded as low morale. From the male’s aspect, Daisy is indifferent, selfish, and vain. She always pursues money and luxurious life and for these she would rather abandon her love with Gatsby and get married to Tom who she does not love. Jordan is an egoist and has independent spirit. She has lower morality for her impenitence and lies and she always ignores others’

interests. Myrtle is a ridiculous character in the movie. Although she has already been married to Wilson, she still becomes the lover of Tom. She attempts to close the upper class society of Tom's status. She shows off her parasitic life and is killed in the end. All the three characters reflect misogyny in that era" (Zhu 2016, p. 98). This reveals that *The Great Gatsby*, is in fact oppressive and serves the best interest of men by deceiving its women to obey men indirectly. At the end, the women in it are exploited for their beauty or status to attend the needs of the men.

4.2 The Representation of Women in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*.

This section explores the representation of Arab women in modern-day times, in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* through the analysis of its leading women: Maha and Um Saad. As in the previous novel, women in *Pillars of Salt* are as well represented negatively as a result of male dominance that is imposed on them due to patriarchal ideologies in the Arabic society. First, the character Maha manifests how deeply paternal beliefs are planted in Jordanian society and other societies alike. Maha seems to be a strong-willed and smart woman- as her father describes her, "The daughter of the tiger of the desert must be a tigress" (Faqir 1997, p. 11) in a village in The Jordan Valley in The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. As the story unravels, the readers see how she manages to take excellent care of her family, such as her elderly father, finish household chores like cooking, and tend the family's

business: farming, sheep breeding, and sheep-rearing. For example, Maha says, “I was the only one who took care of the young gloves” (p. 20) and “We started sweeping at sunrise and finished at sunset” (p. 94). Although this seems like a positive representation, especially at the beginning of the novel, she is later deprived of everything because of her brother, her father and the Pasha. Her brother is a controller as a result of the power given to him by his father, and society too. The Pasha has control due to his high official rank and his close friendship with Maha’s brother. The father, of course, is the head of the family. Therefore, he has the absolute power over all. When her father passes away, her brother, Dafash, becomes the head of the family immediately although he is abusive, as described, “He dug out quarrels from under his fingernails. Where was his dagger, his breakfast, dog. Where were his sandals? He yanked my hair. Filthy rat, ugliest woman on earth Do what I tell you. All that would check the flow of insults and slaps was my father’s long wooden stick. Then Daffash would apologize and give me a packet of foreign chocolates” (Faqir 1997, p. 21). His corruption and evilness do not end there but goes as far as blaming the victim that he rapes for seducing him and forcing him to rape her. At the end, he is not held responsible for it, and even his father supports Daffash’s sayings regarding the matter. Maha describes the incident by saying: “My friend had lost her virginity, her honor, her life. She was nothing now. No longer a virgin,

absolutely nothing” (p. 11). Therefore, the vile Daffash becomes the owner of the family’s business despite his lack of morality and work experience.

Additionally, her suffering does not end at this point, but continues till her marriage. She marries a man whom she loves- a love unknown to her family or they may both get killed for it (Faqir 1997), as expected by family and society, and then is scorned for not bearing a child instantly after “Just five months without pregnancy and the people of Hamia started adding, ‘May Allah give you a son,’ after every greeting” (Faqir 1997, p. 67). Yet, she succeeds in having a child, but her husband dies. This is another turning point in her life as the villagers disdain her for being a widow and a single mother- just as her brother does, so he physically abuses her for days, tries to wed her off to another man, the Pasha, then sends her to a mental hospital when his plan fails as she is seen a “disobedient girl” (Faqir 1997, p. 165). Tawfiq Yousef (2016) agrees that *Pillars of Salt* shows oppressed women in a patriarchal Arab community, and links it to colonialism- a notion supported by the novel as well- suggesting that both paternal communities and patriarchal colonialism cooperate to subjugate women. Although Maha stands against the tyrant, her brother, and runs away to escape her forced marriage to the Pasha, she is still seen as a foul woman by everyone for daring to say no to the man of the family who “has priority” (Faqir 1997, p. 201). And so, as a result of her rebellious acts, she must be silenced along

with everyone who helped her escape. Maha and the women who aided her are attacked verbally and physically while everyone watches, “Beat them up” (Faqir 1997, p.217). The humiliation of the women in public under society’s consent because they are half citizens “No brain and no faith” (Faqir 1997, p. 217). And so, Maha, despite being strong-willed, is still oppressed by the men in her society beginning from her brother to the foreign Pasha and even by men in the village and the men working at the hospital. She tries her best to escape from the abuse she faces but fails ultimately because of the authorities granted to men as a result of patriarchal values in Middle Eastern societies.

During her stay there, she meets another woman, who has also been abused and violated: Um Saad. Haniyyah, Um Saad's premarital name, is an urban woman who lives in the capital of Jordan, Amman. She also suffers because of patriarchal authority, such as her father and later her husband. She falls in love with a non-Arab man, but once her family knows she is hit and forcefully married to an old man, “Without uttering a word, without opening my mouth, I ate about a hundred lashes. My father’s belt reduced me to a heap of flayed meat” (Faqir 1997, p. 100). Even though her beloved proposes to her, her family refuses as he is a Circassian. She is then married off in the most horrid of ways. Her family tells her to get dressed to go to a party with them. She rejoices because she has been permitted to leave the

house, but little did she know that she is going to her own wedding to a man whom she does not know and is many years older than her (Faqir 1997). Her father abuses her physically to force her to marry Abu Saad as a way to resist her begging and refusal. Later, her husband treats her in a similar manner- if not worse. “I will never forget one thing. At night, that man, my husband, who afterwards I discovered was called Abu Saad, chased me and ripped my dress apart. Then he asked me in a weak, thin voice that made the bulk of his body look like a mistake, ‘Have you had your period?’” (p. 109) This shows that Haniyyeh is too young to get married and has gone under great physical, verbal, and sexual abuse because she is the weaker part- a woman. El Bwietel (2015) says that *Pillars of Salt* expresses the unjust treatments and the awful problems of women in patriarchal societies. As the novel’s characters, many women live in misery under male dominance where men are prioritized while women are treated as inferiors. Thus, men condescend women just as in the cases of Um Saad and Maha. Men treat them badly, use them, and abuse them because they have the power to do so as in paternal communities, men have the upper hand and can do as they please.

Yet, unlike Maha, Um Saaad’s marriage is not a happy one; she is treated as a slave who is ordered to do things, clean, cook, bathe, and speak. She says: “used to place his feet in a bowl and wash them with soap and water... I used to spend hours scrubbing and cleaning ... a damp stink which

reminded me of death and sewage” (Faqir 1997, p. 121). She continues describing her marriage to Maha, “We never ever talked, Abu Saad and I. He gave me orders and I listened” (Faqir 1997, p. 151). Yet after all of what she gives to Abu Saad, one may think he will reward her. On the contrary, he goes and finds a new younger wife because Um Saad is looking old. Just as her father does, her husband introduces her to his second bride suddenly without any notice “Yusra, my new wife” (Faqir 1997, p. 178). She is then devastated, especially when she sees another woman in her house, with her husband and children, taking her room, and throwing her belongings away on the floor. So, like a maid, she starts sleeping on the kitchen floor- which bothers no one, not even her children.

Still, Um Saad kept cooking and cleaning just as she used to until she breaks down and runs away. Later, she is sent to the madhouse. Even the mental hospital they are at seems to treat women badly. For example, they shave Um Saad’s head to try shock treatments on her even though they did not treat her nor listened to her story, which indicates the acts of abuse continue along with ignoring her and her voice. Hence, the abuse of women by men continues whether from the family or even at the hospital because men have the absolute power to treat women as inferiors. The patriarchal thinking is extremely planted in the Arab society where abuse seems ordinary and is presented as so in the novel. Men have all the authority, and

women are granted fractions of the rights to remain under men's supervision. If a woman tries to rebel, she is then shunted by the men and their society for daring to say no to those in power whether fathers, brothers, or husbands. Patriarchy in the Middle East resembles patriarchy that existed in the ancient times of Greece where women were treated as second class citizens with limited rights under the rule of men, "It can be clearly established that women in ancient Greece had an inferior position to men" (Auezove 2020). When a woman does something, a man disapproves, she is hysterical, crazy and ought to be sent away to gain her sanity back- just as Maha and Um Saad. Therefore, the ancient concept of patriarchy is seen in contemporary literary works because it exists, still, in contemporary societies. The ideology sets certain roles for men and women that are socially constructed from the ancient times of Greece and are still ongoing today. Moreover, all of the previously mentioned notions are supported by many researchers, such as Conwell (2011) and Abu Orouq (2021). Conwell (2011) believes that Maha is an oppressed character in spite of her tremendous efforts to fight against oppressors such as her brother Daffash. Conwell concludes her thesis by saying, "Daffash wishes to marry her off again for political reasons" (Conwell 2011, p. 49). This shows the depth of planted patriarchal beliefs in Jordan and the Middle East even though their women fight against them. Likewise, Abu Orouq (2021) shares a similar vision as he

explores the violence against Maha and Um Saad in his article. He says that the protagonists of the novel undergo extreme subjugation as a result of patriarchy and patriarchal traditions. He thinks that “Faqir’s text exhibits accumulated forms of physical, psychological, sexual and political violence that jointly work in the framework of an oppressive cycle over the indigenous women” (Abu Orouq 2021, p. 76). He says that Faqir focuses on women of the Middle East, whose voices are less heard than the others as they go under extreme circumstances of oppression and subjugation (Abu Orouq 2021). Also, Awajan (2018) describes the Arab family as the main unit in society, whether in the past or now. She continues by adding that the husband-wife relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the brother-sister relationship are key elements in Arab families, just as in the case of Maha and Um Saad. This explains the power vested to families and how strong they can be, especially if used wrongly then they could be extremely suppressive.

Additionally, in a recent field study by a group of master students who major in Women Studies at the University of Jordan, they found shocking results that resemble the reality reflected in the novel. In an oral interview with one of the students, Dima Abu Sharkh, she states that the women in Anjara in Ajloun and Al Ghour in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan seem oppressed- based on her own analysis. When asked why? She states that the women of these areas are working and attending to their houses’ needs as

they are the key providers for their families, yet their husbands, brothers, or fathers are still in charge as the “men” of the households. She further adds in admiration saying those women are extremely strong and are under harsh circumstances such as poverty, yet they never give up and do their best to keep their families together. In addition, she says the women are not entitled to take any major decisions as they are solely the decisions of men even though the women are their families’ main providers which is a trait often associated with men rather than women (Abu Sharkh 2022). The striking resemblance between the Bedouin Maha, the urban Um Saad and the modern-day conditions of many women in Jordan- as suggested by Abu Sharkh’s observations and study results as all the mentioned women have similar duties such as working at home, having children, providing for the family if needed, and obeying the men in their lives. Abu Sharkh adds that all the women have taken the role of superwomen where they must have children, they must work because their men only want high-status jobs at offices in the capital, and they must do house chores, too. When asked why, Abu Sharkh answers that it is because these are not men’s responsibilities and “that’s how men are” (2022).

4.3 The Similarities between the Female Characters in *Pillars of Salt* and *The Great Gatsby*

This section aims to reveal the similarities and differences between Faqir’s *Pillars of Salt* and Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* in order to link

them to male dominance and patriarchy. Also, this section explains the idea of the almost one-hundred-year gap.

Despite the various cultural differences between the contemporary Middle Eastern culture in *Pillars of Salt* and the Western culture of the roaring twenties in *The Great Gatsby*, both novels share similarities and differences. First, in both books, women seem happy from an outer point of view. From far, the characters appear revolutionary because they are determined, strong, resilient, and daring. On one hand, there is Maha who takes a brave decision to run away from an arranged marriage while on the other, there is Daisy who cheats on her wealthy husband. The women take great risks by making such unfamiliar decisions to their communities. However, once a closer look is taken, it is obvious that they are all suffering from the oppression of men in their lives such as their husbands like Myrtle's husband's and Um Saad's. Also, all the women are put under society's pressure where they cannot act as they please nor have the freedom of choice to do so, and as a result, they live in a sham under the rules and regulations of the society. For example, Daisy is unable to leave her abusive cheating husband because her community would not accept her being with a man from a humble background, Jay Gatsby. As a woman from the elite class, she must abide by her society's values and marry someone of equal status, therefore, she is not to follow her heart and its desire as she is not given the choice by

them in the first place. Throughout the novel Jay Gatsby is constantly judged as he is a bootlegger, so he gathered dirty money to rise to the upper class. Yet, he is never seen by them as a man who belongs with them. He is different from them because of his humble background. Tom knew Daisy's decision from the beginning, especially when he says: "She is not leaving me, certainly not for a common swindler who'd have to steal the ring he put on her finger" (P. 142). Even Nick who admires Jay knows they can never be because they are born from different classes "Eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand" (p. 159). Similarly, Um Saad cannot as well leave her abusive husband as she is unable to stand against her parents nor her society because such actions may have severe consequences that could even be lethal. As in the accidental death of Myrtle Wilson who was running away from her husband's abuse and horrific treatment, and Maha with her hidden messages behind her words, "For a girl to be out at night is a crime of honor. They will shoot me between the eyes" (Faqir 1997, p. 10).

Therefore, women in the two novels are controlled by the men in their lives, such as their fathers and husbands and are given fragments of rights and freedom under patriarchal supervision because their societies are dominated by men- a power vested to them due to the leading patriarchal ideologies and beliefs in their cultures. This links to the term "The New

Woman” that emerged in the ‘20s of the previous century. Women of that time were called “New Women” because they differed from their Victorian predecessors. They gained more rights and reshaped the images of women back then. However, all that they had gained was bestowed to them by men in power who had the authority to do so, and even the rights gained were pieces of rights that kept them under patriarchal control. Similarly, fast forward in time to modern-day Arab women- almost one hundred years, to find that they are going through similar situations and conditions as they are given rights by men in power like marrying and starting a family, yet they are nothing more than merely lent parts of rights by men who are excused even if they abused and raped women; in other words- as Maha’s mother puts it- “What do you expect? He is a boy. Allah placed him a step higher” (Faqir 1997, p. 33). This is Maha’s mother’s reaction to her son’s severe beating of his sister. That he is just a man and that is how they are. Thus, in the 1920s, Myrtle Wilson is abused by her husband and lover while almost after a hundred years, Maha is abused by her brother. Whether in the twentieth century or the twenty-first century, women are oppressed by men and entitled to small bits of freedom. They try to break free from the images imposed on them by society by taking bold fearless decision, but they are then put down by the men in their lives. The women have similar characteristics such as standing against male authority, taking courageous

decisions, and staying strong despite all difficulties. However, they are still under the influence of male dominance as the power is in the hands of patriarchal men. Hence, the term: "The New Arab Woman" which is a new version of "The New Woman."

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the results of the study and answers the questions that are proposed in chapter one of this study. It also presents some recommendations proposed by the researcher that further tackle the issues of women, generally, and women of the Middle East, specifically.

5.1 Conclusion

1. How does Fadia Faqir represent Arab women in her novel *Pillars of Salt*?

Pillars of Salt is one of Fadia Faqir's earliest novels depicting the situation of Arab women in the region of the Middle East. The analysis of Maha and Um Saad pictures their roles in Arab society and literature alike. First, Maha, who is a resilient Bedouin female, is controlled by her father and brother. Despite her great efforts in helping the family, she still does not inherit the family's business, or is allowed to take important decisions nor is permitted to be the head of the family. Instead, all is handed to her brother as he is "the man" in the family even though he is irresponsible, arrogant, and lazy. Similarly, Um Saad, who is a wife, daughter, and mother is treated as a second citizen by all the men of her family, whether it is her father who refuses to wed her to a man because his ancestors are not Arabs, or her children, who look down at her or her husband, who marries a second wife because Um Saad is no longer beautiful. Thus, Um Saad is restrained in a

certain frame that is imposed first by her family and reinforced by her husband, and in this frame, she must satisfy all involved parties even if it means marrying against her will or being used for breeding purposes only. Um Saad also faces all kinds of abuse, such as emotional and physical abuse, which shows that women in the region are dominated by men because patriarchy is deeply rooted in Eastern societies, their values and therefore their arts.

2. How does F. Scott Fitzgerald represent women in his novel *The Great Gatsby*?

As in the previous novel, F. Scott Fitzgerald represents women of the West during the roaring twenties from a patriarchal angle. The paper's focus is on *The Great Gatsby's* leading ladies: Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson- all of whom are controlled by their male partners. Daisy suffers from a patriarchal mind-set which causes her to obey her society's patriarchal values to an extreme limit, where she hopes her daughter will grow up to be no more than a beautiful silly fool, which is the best way to please her community's men, who concentrate only on outer appearance while neglecting all other aspects. Another victim of patriarchal ideologies is Myrtle Wilson whose husband beats her in the name of jealousy although he appears in the novel as a pious man. She is also sexually used and physically abused by Tom Buchanan who gives himself such titles because he is a man and rich. Also, Jordan Baker is subjugated by men, for example,

her partner and narrator of the novel judges her looks and hints that she is not feminine enough for a woman. Thus, such representations of women depict the male dominance of men over women.

3. What are the differences and similarities between the writers' representations of women?

Both the Arab novelist, Fadia Faqir and the American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald show their male and female characters from a paternal point of view. The women in Faqir's novel, published in 1997, are oppressed, abused and are under the control of the men in their lives such as their brothers, husbands, and fathers who have the absolute power and authority bestowed to them by patriarchal ideologies in patriarchal Arab societies. Similarly, Fitzgerald's novel shows women as submissive, subjugated and exploited by their men, especially their husbands. Just as in Faqir's, *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, portrays the unlimited powers men have because they are given great privileges due to the dominant patriarchy in the Western culture. Also, the comparison between the two books reveals a great similarity between Middle Eastern women in contemporary times and Western women during the early 1920s, whether in literary works or in real life, which indicates that the gap between the two groups of women is close to a century. This also explains the terms, The New Woman and The New Arab Woman. Fitzgerald's female characters represent a strong image of women who go against the previous Victorian image that associated Western women as they

can take daring decisions which was not possible before. Similarly, Faqir's female characters are as well revolutionary and resemble Fitzgerald's in terms of determination, resilience, bravery, and strength which hints the finding of the image of the new Arab woman in literature. However, despite sharing such great traits, the women- whether the new women or the new Arab women- are still under the control of the man especially if he is a husband, a brother, or a partner. Thus, Western women in the 1920s and contemporary Arab women have gained more rights than their predecessors, yet they are bestowed upon them by male authority that grants them fragments of freedoms.

5.2 Recommendations

1. More studies should be done on Fadia Faqir's works in representing Arab female characters.
2. More studies should be done on Fadia Faqir's works to link the representations of Arab women in her works to women's realities in the Middle East.
3. More studies should be done to prove the century gap between Arab women and Western women in literary works.
4. More studies should be done on F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* to show the patriarchal dominance of western women in literature.

5. More studies should be done on the patriarchal male dominance of female characters in Arab and Western kinds of literature.

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